

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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SUBJECT: GOVERNMENT RESHUFFLE RECEIVES MIXED REVIEWS

REF: BRUSSELS 12083

SUMMARY: PRESS REACTION INDICATES TINDEMANS GOVERNMENT
LOST PRESTIGE IN PROTRACTED MANEUVERINGS LEADING TO DECEMBER 9
CABINET RESHUFFLE.DURABILITY OF "RE-PLASTERED" MAJORITY IS IN
QUESTION.GOVERNMENT'S ABILITY TO UNDERTAKE VIGOROUS ACTION
IN SOCIO-ECONOMIC FIELD AND PARTY PRESIDENT GENDEBIEN'S FUTURE
SUCCESS IN KEEPING HIS RW TROOPS IN THE GOVERNMENT
LINE ARE MAJOR QUESTION MARKS.END SUMMARY.

1.DECEMBER 9 CABINET RESHUFFLE (REFTEL)GOT A MIXED
RECEPTION IN BELGIAN POLITICAL QUARTERS,OPPSOTION PRESS SAW
"REPLASTERED" MAJORITY AS PROMISING NOT HOPE AND
PROGRESS BUT PARALYSIS.BRUSSELS SOCIALIST DAILY
LE PEUPLE FOUND TINDEMANS READY TO ACCEPT " ANYBODY TO
DO ANYTHING" SO LONG AS HIS GOVERNMENT IS PRESERVED
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A FEW WEEKS LONGER.THE COMMUNIST DRAPEAU ROUGE

DWELT ON TINDEMANS' COMPLICITY IN " POLITICAL IMMORALITY" OF RW
DESERTERS (AND CABINET MINISTERS) GOL AND KNOOPS,AND
ECHOED THE FDF CHARGE THAT "GOVERNMENT ENDURES,BUT STAGNATES".

2.THE LIBERAL (CONSERVATIVE)PRESS CAUTIONED THAT
BELGIAN POLITICAL LEADERS WERE RISKING ADVERSE REACTION
FROM A PUBLIC EXASPERATED BY " MUCH NOISE ABOUT NOTHING".
BRUSSELS CATHOLIC LABOR DAILY,LA CITE DESCRIBED THE RESHUFFLE
AS ONE OF THE WORST EVENTS IN RECENT POLITICAL HISTORY.HET VOLK
THE CATHOLIC LABOR DAILY ON THE FLEMISH SIDE,UNDERSTOOD TINDEMANS'
NEED TO DEAL WITH THE RW'S PETTY MANEUVERING,BUT SAW HIS
GOVERNMENT AS HAVING BEEN SUBSTANTIALLY WEAKEND IN THE PROCESS.
THE CONSERVATIVE INDEPENDENT DE STANDAARD ALSO CHARACTERIZED
THE TINDEMANSTEM AS "ENFEEBLED",A JUDGMENT ECHOED BY THE CATHOLIC
CONSERVATIVE GAZET VAN ANTWERPEN.THE BRUSSELS DAILY
LE SOIR WAS LESS SURE,OPINING THAT THE WORST HAD BEEN
AVOIDED,BUT THAT GOVERNMENT HAD NOW TO ENDURE AND ACT.
THE CONSERVATIVE CATHOLIC LA LIBRE BELGIQUE FOUND
SATISFACTION IN THE SURVIVAL OF THE GOVERNMENT,BUT
SAW TWO LESSONS IN THE VENT: THE DANGER OF INCLUDING
A "COMMUNITY" PARTY IN THE GOVERNMENT MAJORITY; AND
A NEED FOR GOVERNMENT TO ACT VIGOROUSLY JON SOCIO-
ECONOMIC ISSUES)IN ORDER TO RETRIEVE CREDIT LOST THROUGH

THE "GAME OF MUSICAL CHAIRS".

3.COMMENT: VIRTUALLY THE ENTIRE SPECTRUM OF PRESS
COMMENT FEATURED HARD WORDS FOR THE WALLOON RALLY,
AND REFLECTED IMPATIENCE BORDERING ON EXASPERATION WITH
A GOVERNMENT SEEN AS WEAKENED AND TAINTED BY WHAT
DE STANDAARD DESCRIBED AS A SENSELESS SQUABBLE OF
"POLITICAL CRABS IN A BASKET."

4. RW REMAINS THE WEAKEST LINK IN THE MAJORITY CHAIN,
WITH "NON- PARTICIPATIONIST" ELEMENTS STILL A POTENTIAL
THREAT TO PARTY PRESIDENT
GENDEBIEN AND,INDIRECTLY,
TO TINDEMANS.IF GENDEBIEN CAN KEEP HIS TROOPS IN LINE,
TINDEMANS GOVERNMENT MAY YET LUMBER ON TO ITS OFT-STATED
GOAL - THE 1978 LEGISLATIVE ELECTIONS.BUT IT WILL
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SURELY FACE SEVERE TESTING WELL BEFORE THAT DATE-
THE NEXT " CRISIS" BEING FREELY PREDICTED TO ERUPT IN
FEBRUARY, 1977 WHEN POLITICAL ACTIVITY RESUMES AFTER THE
HOLIDAY SEASON.
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